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**COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES**

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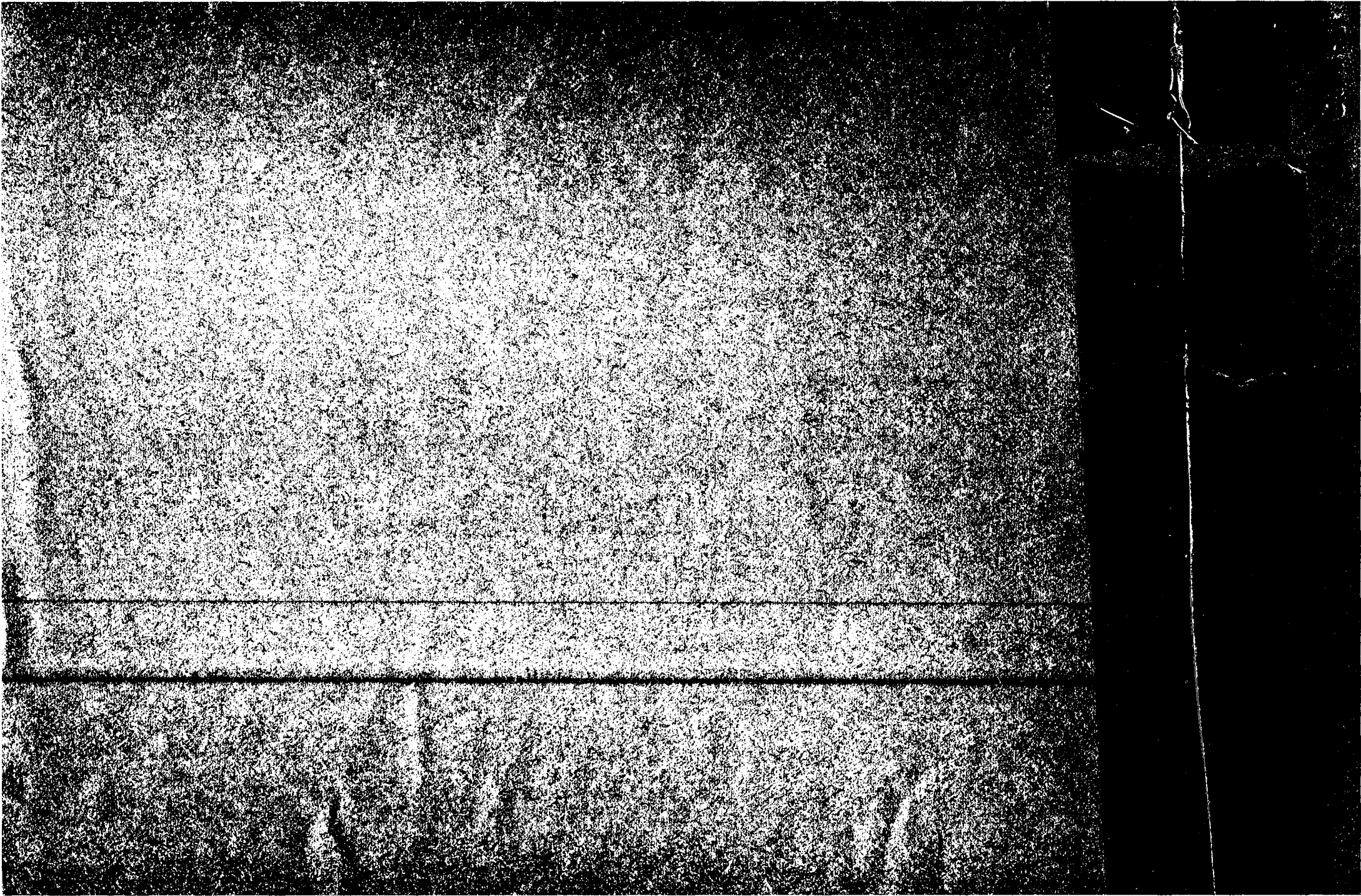
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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

concerning the examination for trichinae in pigmeat  
imported to the Community from non-member countries

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1. When adopting Directive 77/96/EEC of 21 December 1976 on the examination for trichinae (*trichinella spiralis*) upon importation from third countries of fresh meat derived from domestic swine (OJ No. L 26 of 31 January 1977) the Council decided to enter the following statement in the minutes of its meeting on 20 and 21 December 1976:

"The Council notes the Commission's intention to carry out the necessary investigations with a view to presenting before 31 December 1977 a report and, where necessary, proposals concerning the regulations in certain non-member countries relating to trichinosis".

The Commission expressed the intention contained in the above statement following comments made by the delegation of one Member State during the examination of the above mentioned Directive by the group of agricultural and veterinary experts prior to its adoption by the Council. This delegation raised the problem of the possibility of exempting non-member countries under certain conditions, from the obligation provided for in the Directive to submit all pigmeat to an examination for trichinae or, in certain cases, to treatment by freezing.

2. In order to study this problem, the Commission organized a meeting on 28 April 1977 of the Scientific Veterinary Committee with the following agenda :

"Council Directive 77/96/EEC (OJ No. L 26 of 31.1.1977) provides that all fresh pigmeat from non-member countries must be subjected to a compulsory examination for trichinae (Article 2) or, in certain cases, to treatment by freezing (Article 3).

The discussion will deal with the following points:

1. Can a country be considered free from trichinosis and in what circumstances?

2. If the reply to the above question is in the affirmative by what criteria may a country be considered free from trichinosis?
3. In view of the answers given to the first two questions, would it be possible under certain circumstances to exempt meat exported to the Community from a non-member country from the above-mentioned obligation?"

Since the discussion on the various points was not concluded, a second meeting was held on 18 January 1978. Meanwhile, the proposals from the delegates of the United Kingdom, Denmark and the Netherlands, specifying the criteria and circumstances which in their opinion enabled a country to be considered free from trichinosis, were distributed to the other delegates.

The opinions expressed at the meeting on 18 January 1978 concerning the different items on the agenda, can be summarized as follows :

1. First Question

- a) In the form in which it was put, this question was unanimously answered in the negative; given the present state of our knowledge it is impossible to affirm that a country is free from trichinosis.
- b) However, certain delegations thought that, given adequate epidemiological surveys carried out by the public health and veterinary services, it should be possible to state that a country, while not being free from trichinosis in the strict sense, had such a low level of infection that it did not represent a danger for public health and that the measures imposed by Council Directive 77/96/EEC could therefore, be moderated in respect of it.
- c) Other delegations considered that even an extremely low level of trichinosis, which did not manifest itself by any clinical symptoms either in man or animals, would nevertheless represent a potential danger for public health and that it would, therefore, not be appropriate to relax the provisions of Council Directive 77/96/EEC.

2. Second Question

Two interpretations were given to the expression "considered free from trichinosis".

Some delegations favoured a strict interpretation of the expression to mean that there must exist absolutely no trichinae on the territory of the country in question. Others thought that the expression should be interpreted more pragmatically so that in a given country, a certain level of infection (percentage of subjects who were carriers of the parasite) and intensity of infestation (number of parasites per gramme of diaphragm muscle in an infested animal) could exist provided that these were sufficiently low as to present no danger to public health.

The supporters of the former interpretation were led logically to give a negative reply to the second question raised, their answer to the first question having been completely negative.

On the other hand, the supporters of a pragmatic interpretation considered that criteria for level and intensity of infestation could be defined, making it possible to fix a limit below which a country could be regarded for practical purposes as disease-free.

### 3. Third Question

Here again opinions were divided:

- a) Some considered that only an examination for trichinae using one of the methods laid down by the EEC in Directive 77/96/EEC, carried out on all pigs slaughtered for export of their meat to the EEC, or the cold treatment described in that Directive could provide adequate guarantees with regard to the protection of public health in EEC countries;
- b) Others were of the opinion that equivalent guarantees could be obtained if, instead of the measures referred to in a) above, very strict periodic epidermimological surveys were carried out, the arrangements and criteria for which should be defined in detail by the EEC, which should also monitor the conduct of such surveys.

4. The Commission considered that at this stage there should be no relaxation of the obligation provided for in Council Directive 77/96/EEC whereby all pigmeat exported to a Member State from a non-member country should be subjected to an examination for trichinae or, in certain cases, to cold treatment.

The Commission was of the opinion that this obligation should be maintained in order to ensure the protection of consumer health. However, studies could usefully be carried out to determine whether it was possible to relax this obligation without reducing the guarantees provided by the existing provisions.